

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 233950

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR,BENC,GB

SUBJECT: BONGO MEETINGS WITH U.S. FIRMS

REF: LIBREVILLE 1880

1. SUBJECT MEETINGS OCCURRED ONLY IN NEW YORK. THEY INCLUDED LUNCHEON HOSTED BY CITIBANK, INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH FIVE FIRMS AND INDIRECT CONTACT THROUGH CITIBANK WITH ANOTHER FIRM. AS A RESULT, SIX VISIT TO GABON BY U.S. FIRMS CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED BEFORE END OF OCTOBER. PROBLEMS WERE MENTIONED IN ONLY TWO INTERVIEWS--WITH BETHLEHEM STEEL AND CHARLES T. MAIN INTERNATIONAL (CTMI).

2. CITIBANK LUNCHEON: FIRMS REPRESENTED WERE, BESIDES HOST REPS, UNION CARBIDE, RAYMOND INTERNATIONAL, OCEANIC CONTRACTORS, CTMI, TAMS, BROWN AND ROOT, TEMPELSMAN, SOROS ASSOCIATES, BETHLEHEM STEEL. COMMERCE (CONGER) WAS USG ATTENDEE. BONGO STRESSED HIS INTEREST IN INVESTMENT FROM U.S., DENIED GABON IS A CHASSE GARDEE FOR ANYONE.

3. PRIVATE INTERVIEWS HELD WITH OCEANIC CONTRACTORS (ROY STRIEKERT, V.P.); BETHLEHEM STEEL (FREDERICK WEST, CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESIDENT); TAMS(ROBERT HEINS, PARTNER, BENMOUVAR, AND

ALIMANESTIANO); CTMI (JOHN BARRETT, V.P. AND GERARD BLANC); BROWN AND ROOT, INC.(BERNARD PIEPER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, AND JOHN SLOANE).

4. CONTACT WAS MADE BY GABONESE (MIGALA) WITH IT&T THROUGH CITIBANK LEADING TO IT&T AGREEMENT TO SEND OUT A TEAM IN EARLY OCTOBER TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVING GABONESE OVERSEAS TELEPHONE FACILITIES. CITIBANK IS HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS. (FYI, THIS CONTACT STEMMED FROM BONGO IRE OVER INABILITY TO REACH LIBREVILLE BY PHONE FROM NEW YORK END FYI).

5. PROBLEMS RAISED WITH BONGO: CTMI MENTIONED NEED TO OBTAIN EDF PRELIMINARY REPORT RE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR GRAND POUBARA, BUT THIS WAS DONE BRIEFLY AND IN LOW KEY. BETHLEHEM STEEL MENTIONED THE CONTINUING GENERAL PROBLEM OF TRANSPORTING ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES TO IRON ORE EVALUATION SITE NEAR BELINGA, BUT THIS WAS ALSO DONE IN LOW KEY AND GRACEFULLY. NONE OF PROBLEM PRESENTATIONS PROVOKED DEFENSIVE OR NEGATIVE REACTION FROM BONGO.

6.PRIVATE MEETINGS WERE BRIEF (15-30 MINUTES). FIRMS STRESSED THEIR GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS, INTEREST IN GABON, SPECIFIC INTEREST IN PROJECTS. RE LATTER INTEREST; GRAND POUBARA (CTMI, TAMS, BROWN AND ROOT -- LATTER FOR CONSTRUCTION ONLY); SANTA CLARA (OCEANIC CONTRACTORS, BROWN AND ROOT); SOGACEL (BROWN AND ROOT); TRANSGABON (TAMS).

7.RE AIR GABON, RICE AND WALLACE OF PANAM MET WITH DIRECTEUR DE CABINET MAYILA FOR BRIEF DISCUSSION. UPSHOT OF MEETING WAS AGREEMENT THAT PANAM WOULD SEND REPS TO LIBREVILLE IN EARLY OR MID-OCTOBER. FYI, ACCORDING TO RICE, PANAM WANTS TO AVOID SEEMING TO PURSUE THIS PROJECT TOO AGGRESSIVELY IN VIEW OF PAST SUPPORT FOR AIR AFRIQUE. INPETUS WILL HAVE TO COME FROM GOG-END FYI.

8. PROBABLE FOLLOW-UP VISITS: OCEANIC CONSTRUCTORS FIRMLY INDICATED A COMPANY OFFICER (FYI: PROBABLY STRIEKERT) WOULD ARRIVE GABON EARLY OCTOBER--I.E., BEFORE OCTOBER 15. CONFIDENTIAL

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BROWN&ROOT AGREED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO GABON EARLY IN OCTOBER. IT&T HAS SLATED VISIT AS INDICATED PARA 5 (ABOVE). PANAM PER PARA (7). ROBERT HEINS AND BENMOUVAR OF TAMS PLAN TO VISIT GABON WEEK OF OCTOBER 18. IN RESPONSE TO BONGO GENERAL INVITATION, BETHLEHEM STEEL PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD TRY TO COME OUT IN NEAR FUTURE. (FYI: WHETHER OR NOT HE CAN DO SO, THERE ARE FREQUENT VISITS BY SENIOR BETHLEHEM STEEL OFFICERS TO GABON, AS EMBASSY KNOWS, AND

ONE OR TWO SUCH VISITS WILL OCCUR IN OCTOBER). SOROS
PROJECT MANAGER JAVOR LEFT FOR GABON SEPT. 20. COMMERCE/
MEPD WILL COORDINATE OTHER VISITS MENTIONED ABOVE AND KEEP
EMBASSY ADVISED. ROBINSON

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